

GUIDANCE TO GRACE AND GLORY

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.”
Psalms 73:24

THE psalmist here evidently perceives that his Lord is near, he does not so much speak *of* God as *to* Him, “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel.” You know what the French call, *tutoyage*—thou-ing and thee-ing, there is something of that kind of language in the text, a speaking in tones of hallowed familiarity with God. As if the Lord were just close by, the psalmist says to Him, “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory,” not in the way of prayer asking God to do so, but in childlike confidence expressing the conviction that it shall be so, and rejoicing in the blessed assurance of it. “Thou shalt—I know Thou wilt, I am sure of it, I have firm reliance on it, and I bless Thee for it—‘Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.’”

It is not every man who can talk like that, and it is not every believing man who has yet attained confidence enough to dare to speak so. It is well if you can only pray that this may be the case with you, but the sweetness lies in grasping this truth with a childlike delight, and with unfaltering faith believing it to be yours, “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.”

The psalmist had been to some extent, finding fault with the providence of God. There had been in his mind, a quarrel with God's proceedings. He saw the wicked in great power, having all their wishes and desires gratified in every way, while he himself was sorely plagued and chastened, and he could not quite understand it, but now, even though he does not comprehend it, he yields to God's superior judgment, he lays aside his own logic and his arguments, and he says, “No, Lord, I will no longer be a debater, but Thou shalt guide me, I will no longer look for present joy, I will look to that which is to come afterward. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward shall come my brilliant days, my times of joy, afterward Thou wilt receive me to glory.”

You see that after drifting about for a while, the psalmist has come to a good anchorage. He has found a resting place as the birds do, when after wandering away, they fly back to their nest and he sings, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.”

Sitting down once more at the feet of his Lord, he looks up into those dear, tender, loving, watchful eyes and he says, “‘Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.’ My discussions are all over now, my questions are at an end, I will rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, and my soul shall be content with His will, whatever it is.”

I pray that what the Holy Spirit may lead me to say upon my text may have an effect something like that upon any tempest tossed spirits here. May they also be brought to rest in the Lord!

First, dear friends, I will speak concerning *the conviction which led the psalmist to take a guide*, secondly, I will say a little upon *the confidence which led him to take God for his Guide*, thirdly, I will talk to you about *the delightful commerce between the psalmist and his God*, which began when God had become his Guide, and continued throughout his life. And then the fourth point, which shall be our *finis*, shall be, *the sure result of this guidance*. “Thou shalt afterward receive me to glory.”

I. First then, concerning THE CONVICTION WHICH LED THE PSALMIST TO TAKE A GUIDE.

Happily for him, that conviction *came very early*. If I am to have a guide on my journey, I should like to have one at the beginning, for it is the starting that has so much to do with all the rest of the way. If I start due south, when I ought to have gone north, I shall have to retrace many a weary step.

Dear young friends, if you can have God to be your Guide now in the morning of life, how happy you will be! It will influence for good the whole of your future existence, depend upon it! As the river is colored by the glacier from which it flows, and never, even when larger and deeper, quite loses the whiteness of its mountain source, so, if you begin with God at the fountainhead and spring of life, there will be a peculiar charm around your pathway as long as ever you live.

Permit me to say that I have found it so myself. I can say to my Lord and do often say it, “O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth: and until now have I declared Thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not.” There is a sweet plea when years multiply upon you, if you can say to the Lord—

*“In early years Thou wast my Guide,
And of my youth the Friend.”*

David began to experience divine guidance while he was a shepherd boy, and it was well for him that it was so, but why did he ever feel that he needed a guide? I suppose it was because of *a work of grace upon his heart*, for, naturally, we do not like being guided. The mother’s apron strings grow irksome to the young man when he finds the down coming upon his cheek, he will have his own way, is it not manly to be one’s own master?

Allow me to say that there is no master worse, you had better serve the greatest tyrant than be your own master. But it is often thus with the young, at first they call it liberty to have their own way, and it is only when the grace of God softens and sobers them, when He gives the young men wisdom, knowledge, and discretion, that they begin to dream that they need a guide.

I heard a good old man speak the other day. He was a doctor of divinity, and I introduced him to the children in a somewhat jocose manner, by telling them that he was a doctor of divinity, and that doctors of divinity knew everything, and a few things besides, but when he began to speak, he said, “My dear children, I do not know everything, but I will tell you one thing that I do know, I do know that I do not know much. I have been a long time learning it, but I have at last learned that I do not know much,”

And when he had expatiated upon that, he said, “and dear children, I have learned another thing, I do know that I am not fit to take care of myself. I wonder,” he added, “whether all the boys and girls here have yet come to that conviction, that they are not fit to take care of themselves, and that they need somebody to lead them all the way through life.” It is a fine piece of knowledge when you have learned as much as that.

I do pray that all who are young may learn it soon, and that others who by painful experience, begin to see that they are not quite as wise as they thought they were, will come to the conclusion that they are not fit to manage themselves after all, and that they want a higher power, a wiser eye, a keener mind, a mightier hand, a supreamer will, to govern them than any that they have of their own.

I suppose that the psalmist said to the Lord, “Thou shalt guide me,” because *he had been convinced of his own folly*, and therefore felt that it was well to commit himself into wiser hands, and also that *he had obtained some knowledge of the difficulties of the way*.

The way of life is a trying one to most people, to many it is very difficult. To those who find it easy, it is probably less so than to those who find it difficult. It is a very unfriendly world to live in if you have to fight with poverty, or if you have to work hard to provide sufficient for the day’s needs, but I question whether it is not a worse world to the man who has not to work, and who has all that heart can wish.

The most perilous position for a young man to be placed in is, very early in life to have a large income with nobody to check him in spending it, and to be permitted to do just whatever he likes.

Oh! those very smooth ways, how many slip therein who might have stood perhaps, had the road been rougher! But to no one of us is the path of life an easy one, if we desire to be pure, and clean, and upright, and accepted with God. He is indeed a fool who attempts to walk in that way without a guide. Look at yourself, full of folly, look at the way, full of pitfalls and dangers of every kind, you may well stop and say, "I must have a guide, I dare not go alone a step further on such a perilous path."

No doubt the psalmist *had seen others set out without a guide*, and he had heard of their falls, and of their ruin. You have not lived long young man, but you have been in the world long enough to have seen or to have heard of many who seemed likely to be great and good, who nevertheless have come to an evil end. That will be your portion too, as well as theirs, if you venture to walk in this difficult way without a guide.

The psalmist's desire to have a guide also showed *his great anxiety to be right*. I wish that all men began life with an earnest desire to act rightly in it, and that each one would say, "I shall never live this life again, I should like to make it a good one as far as I can." Since you cannot come back to mend it, but as it is, it will have to be presented before the great Judge of all, seek to do that which is right each day, and to obey your God every hour you live. If this were the intense desire of every one of us, we should be driven at once to this conclusion, "I must have a guide. I want to live a glorious life, and if I am to do so, I must be helped in it, for I am incompetent for the task by myself."

I am merely giving you the outline of a sermon, I have not time to fill it up, so now I leave this first point, the conviction which led the psalmist to take a guide.

II. Secondly, let us think of THE CONFIDENCE WHICH LED HIM TO TAKE GOD AS HIS GUIDE. If we were but in our right senses, we should all do so.

A man looking about wisely for a guide, will prefer to have *the very best*, and is not God, who is infinitely wise, the best Guide that we can have? Who questions it? Is not the Lord also the most loving, the most tender, the most considerate, the most fatherly of all beings who can be chosen as a guide? Wisdom, when attended with discourtesy and unfeeling roughness, may be shunned by us, but divine wisdom, dressed in robes of love and tenderness, invites us to run into her arms. Choose God, I pray you, because He so well knows the way, and because He has such a tender love for poor trembling humanity.

Choose Him also because of *His constant, unceasing, infallible care*. If I choose a guide who may die on the road, I am likely to be unhappy, but God will never die. If I choose a guide who, being my friend at the starting, will not care for me when I have advanced half way on my journey, I am unwise in my choice, but God cannot change, He will ever be the same.

If I had to ascend the Alps and I selected a guide who could help me over the easy portions of the road, but would be unable to aid me in the more difficult parts of it, I should again be unhappy. The Lord is a Guide who will never fail, and never alter, and never die. Oh, you are wise indeed if you will say to Him, "My God, thou shalt guide me with thy counsel!"

But will God guide us? Well, it were in vain to choose Him if He would not, but of all beings God is *most easy of access*. You know how it is with some of us who are very, very, very busy, and who scarcely ever have a moment's rest at all from the rising of the sun till far into the night. There is a knock at the door, there is another knock at the door, there is another, and at last, if we are to be prepared for our public duties, we are obliged to say that we cannot be seen, we must have a little time to ourselves.

But there is never an hour when God cannot be seen, never a moment when His door will not open to any who come to ask advice of Him, and God is everywhere, so that wherever you are you can find Him, not only in the place where you bow the knee in private prayer, but out on the exchange, amid the throng of men, or in the streets, or on the omnibus, or in the ship at sea, or in the flying train, anywhere and everywhere A breath, an aspiration will find Him, or—

"The upward glancing of an eye,"

a sigh, an unexpressed desire, and you have come to Him at once, and He has servants everywhere to do the bidding of His love when we have sought His help.

The psalmist was truly wise in saying to the Lord, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel." Dear friends, are you equally wise in that way? I see young men and young women here in considerable numbers, will not each of you say, "Yes, Lord, it is even so, from this 4th day of October, my heart says to Thee, 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel'?"

III. Now I must pass on to my third point, only skimming the surface of the subject. Think of THE HEAVENLY COMMERCE WHICH NOW BEGINS BETWEEN THE SOUL AND ITS GUIDE.

How does God guide men? Here let me warn you against the superstitions which some persons use with the idea that God will guide them in that way. Above all, avoid the superstition which some practice by opening the Bible at random in the hope of being guided by the text which comes first to sight. You will be often misled if you act thus. The heathen acted so with Virgil and I think the heathen were, in that respect, better than Christians, because when they played the fool, they did it with Virgil, not with God's Book.

Do not so, I pray you. One of these days you may open at this text, "He went and hanged himself," and if you are not satisfied with that passage, you may open the Bible at another place, and find it written, "Go, and do thou likewise," but that will not excuse you if you commit suicide. Nothing can be more wicked and absurd than such a practice as that.

How then does God guide us? First, by *the general directions of His Word*. You need to know what God would have you to do. Nine times out of ten, look to the Ten Commandments, and you will at least know what you must not do, and knowing what you must not do, you will be able to conclude what you may do. There are some wonderfully plain directions in God's Word as to all manner of circumstances and conditions.

You may often imitate the saints of old, and you may always imitate their Master, and in imitating Christ, you will know what to do. This is the question that will guide you as to your course of action—What would Jesus Christ have done if He had been in my circumstances? Apart from His Godhead, in which you cannot copy Him, what would the Man Christ Jesus have done? Do that, for it is sure to be the wisest thing. So first, be guided by the general directions given in God's Word.

The next way of guidance is that there are *great principles infused in every man who takes God for his Guide*. Among the rest, there are principles like this, avoid everything that is evil. That one direction post will often stop you, and show you which way you ought not to go, because if there is anything wrong about the road, however profitable it may seem to be, however easy and pleasant it is, and above all, however customary it is for others to go that way, you must not travel along it. There are many in the broad road, but you must not make one more. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." You keep to the narrow way, and you will be in the right road.

The next general principle of our holy religion is that we ought to live for the glory of God alone. You could not have a much better guide than such questions as these, "What action would reflect most honor upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Which course would be most creditable to my religious profession? Which would be likely to do most good?" Follow that rule, it is almost equal to the Urim and Thummim of the high priest if you have these questions to guide you!

You are bidden also to show love to your fellow men. If you are in a difficulty about two courses of action, do the more loving of the two, that by which you can most deny yourself, and most benefit your fellow creatures, especially with reference to their salvation. Thus, by infusing principles of disinterestedness, principles of faith in God, principles of humility and contentment, the Word of God and the Spirit of God supply us with directions on the road we are to travel.

Next to this, God guides His people on the way of life *by giving a certain balance of the faculties*. When we come to God in penitence, when we are born again of the Spirit, and live by faith in Christ, then first of all, fear is banished, and faith takes its place. We are then better able to judge which is the right road. "There were they in great fear, where no fear was."

Many a man has done wrong because he had not the courage to do right, but you who have been born again have not the spirit of fear, but the spirit of love, and courage, and faith, and you have a sound mind, so that thus you are guided aright. By your faculties being left undisturbed by fear, your mental balance is maintained.

Obstinacy is a shocking thing as a guide in life, young men have resolved that they will do so and so if they die for it. Yes, but the grace of God dethrones obstinacy, and gives us in its place, acquiescence in the divine will. Bowing with submission to the will of God, by that very fact we are furnished with unerring guidance.

Haste too, is the author of a great deal of mischief in human life. Men are in such a hurry that they make all manner of mistakes, but the habit of praying about everything is in itself a great guide. You have to stop a while, and the very stopping lets you see more than you would have seen in your hurry. The habit of praying before you leap leads to the habit of looking before you leap, and then, when you perceive that you cannot leap, prayer gives you enough of prudence to resolve that you will go round some other way. Thus you are wisely guided in life.

Above all, the grace of God guides us very much by the dethroning of self as the traitorous lord of our being, and makes us loyal to Christ. When a man acts out of loyalty to Christ, he is pretty sure to act very wisely and rightly. On this point alone I should have liked to have had an hour's talk with you, but I must draw my remarks to a close.

I believe that, over and above this infusion of right principles, and balancing of the faculties, there is *a special illumination of mind which comes from dwelling near God*. Everybody knows how near akin sin is to insanity. Well now, remember that holiness is as near akin to perfect wisdom as sin is to insanity, and when you yield yourself to the holy influences of God's presence, you shall have given to you what men call "shrewd commonsense," but what is really an illumination produced in your mind by getting near to God and being made like Him.

And lastly, I believe that at the very worst times, when all these things will fail you as a guide, *you may expect mysterious impulses*, for which you can never account, which will come to you and guide you aright. There are many stories, which I should like to have told, relating to instances in which men of God have been directed by some strange impulse on their minds, to do things which they had never thought of doing, and what they have done has turned out to be for the saving of life, or for deliverance from great evils.

Oh, yes! if you live near God, He will say things to you that He will not tell to anybody else. There are monitions of the Spirit which come to men who deal intimately with the Invisible, that do not come to everybody, only let not every fool who gets a silly notion into his head run away with the idea that it came from God.

Only this week, a young man said to me, "You believe the Bible, sir?" "Yes, I believe the Bible, certainly." "Do you believe what God says?" "Certainly I do." "Well," he said, "I had a revelation the other night, and a voice said to me, 'Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.'" "All right," I said, and he then said to me, "That door leads into your college, and you are to take me in." I replied, "So I will when I get a revelation that I am to do so, but you see, the revelation, whatever it is worth, has only come to you, and I shall not let you in till I have one to the same effect." I have a notion that I shall never have that revelation, and that he himself received it, not from God's Word, but through a slight aperture in his cracked brain.

There are many persons who get revelations of that kind, to which we pay no sort of attention. The mysterious impulses that I mean come only to those who are really serving God, and who, in closely waiting upon Him, find that "the secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant."

IV. But I must finish my discourse. The *finis* was to be, THE SURE RESULT OF THIS GUIDANCE, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

On earth there is no real glory for us unless we are guided by God's counsel. There is no true glory for any man who takes his own course, but glory is for those of you who put your hand into the hand of the great Father, and pray Him to forgive all your iniquities for Christ's sake, and lead you in the way everlasting. Afterward, He will receive you to glory.

This is a delightful thought, but I can now only answer this one question. *When we die, who will receive us into glory?* Well, I do not doubt that the angels will. John Bunyan's description of the shining ones who come down to the brink of the river to help the pilgrims up on the other side of the cold stream, I doubt not is all true, but the text tells us of Somebody better than the angels who will come and receive us. Our dying prayer to our Lord will be, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," and His answer will be, "I receive you to glory."

Our heavenly Father stands watching for the moment when our redeemed spirit shall pass into His hands that He may receive it. Our Savior, who bought us with His precious blood, stands waiting to receive the jewel for which He paid so dear a price. The Spirit of God, who dwells in us, is also waiting to perfect the work which He has carried on so long, and to lift us up into the blessedness of the eternal city.

Oh, how I wish that every person here who has not yet yielded himself or herself to Christ, would do so now! Breathe silently these words before you quit the pew, I will give you a second or two in which to do it, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." Bow your heads and let that prayer be offered.

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Lord, Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory! For Jesus' sake, accept this resolve! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 39

To the chief Musician, even to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

Jeduthun was one of those who led the sacred song in the house of God in David's day, and long afterwards, we find the son of Jeduthun still engaged in this holy service. What a blessing it is to be succeeded in the work of God by your children from generation to generation! May that be your privilege, my dear brethren! May your families never lack a man to stand before the Lord God of Israel to sing His praises!

This is called, "A Psalm of David." His life was a very checkered one, sometimes he was very joyous, and then he wrote bright and happy psalms. But he was a man of strong passions and deep feelings, so at times he was very sad, and then he touched the mournful string. This is a very sorrowful psalm, but it is full of teaching. How grateful we ought to be that such a man as David ever lived, and that he had such a wonderful experience! It may be said of him that he was—

*"A man so various, that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome."*

Well was he made the type of Christ in whose great heart the joys and sorrows of humanity met to the full. Thus the psalmist sings—

Verse 1. *I said, I will take heed to my ways,—*

It is not everybody who would like to recollect what he has uttered, but David could remember and dwell upon what he had formerly said, "I said, I will take heed to my ways." That is a good thing to do.

He that does not take heed to his ways had need do so. Heedless and careless, and heedless and graceless, are much the same thing. He that does not take heed of what he does will be sure to do wrong.

1. *That I sin not with my tongue;*

He that does not sin with his tongue usually has his whole nature under government. The tongue is the rudder of the vessel, and if that be managed well, the ship will be rightly steered. "I said, I resolved, I determined, and I uttered my determination, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." Just then David was sinning in his heart, for it was in a great state of ferment, but he said, "I will not sin with my tongue."

It was with him as it sometimes is with the captain of a vessel, if someone on board is suffering from the yellow fever, the ship master will not send a boat to shore for fear of spreading infection, his vessel will be in quarantine till all danger is past. It was thus with David, while all within him was seething and boiling in feverish impatience, he said, "I shall not speak for the present, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue."

1. *I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.*

The marginal reading is, "with a muzzle for my mouth." David would not speak at all, and herein he was not right. If he had said, "I will keep my mouth with a bridle," as our translation has it, that would have been perfectly proper. We ought never to leave off bridling our tongue, but David muzzled his. He would not speak at all while the wicked were before him, he knew that they would misconstrue his words, that they would make mischief of whatever he said, so he muzzled himself when in their company.

2. *I was dumb with silence.*

"I did not speak, I could not speak, 'I was dumb with silence.'"

2. *I held my peace, even from good;*

David's conduct proves that even when we are doing something which is right, we are apt to overdo it, and so we stray into a vice while pursuing a virtue. You can run so close to the heels of a virtue that they may knock out your teeth, you may be so ardent for one good thing that you may miss another, "I held my peace, even from good."

2. *And my sorrow was stirred.*

Not giving it vent, it boiled and seethed, "My sorrow was stirred." Sometimes a little talk is a great easement to a troubled spirit, but as David was dumb, his sorrow was not still.

3. *My heart was hot within me, while I was musing, the fire burned:*

There was an inward friction, his griefs kept revolving till his heart grew hot, this heat generated fire which burned so vehemently that at last, the psalmist could not help himself, and he was obliged to speak.

3. *Then spake I with my tongue,—*

Whether rightly or wrongly, he must say something, he could not hold himself in any longer, "Then spake I with my tongue."

4. *LORD,—*

If you must speak, address your words to the Lord. So David does, he does not speak to the wicked, but he prays to God most holy.

4. *Make me to know mine end,—*

Did he wish to die? Perhaps so, you remember that one of the two men who never died once prayed that he might die. Elijah did so, and David does so here, I think if I put a hard construction on his speech, "LORD, make me to know mine end." But if I read it more tenderly, I may make it to mean, "Lord, help me to recollect that my sorrows will not last for ever!" That thought will tone them down and keep them in check, "Make me to know mine end."

4-5. *And the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth;*

That is, the breadth of your four fingers, all the length of life is to be measured by a span.

5. *And mine age is as nothing before thee:*

All that exists is as nothing before God. What are even the elder-born of angels but the infants of an hour in contrast with the ages of eternity? The world itself is only like a bubble blown yesterday, the sun is as a spark struck from the anvil of omnipotence but a few days ago, and as for man, compared with the eternal God, he is “as nothing.”

5. *Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.*

Or as the Hebrew has it, every Adam is all Abel. Was not Abel the child of Adam, and was he not soon cut off? Every man even at his best state is altogether vanity. What poor creatures we are! Our breath is not more airy than we ourselves are, our lives are but as a mist that is blown away by the wind.

“Selah.” When the psalmist had come so far, he stopped a while, to screw up the strings of his harp, such pressure as he had given it had taken away its melodious tones, and it needed to be brought again up to concert pitch.

6. *Surely every man walketh in a vain shew:*

Like players, or actors, all of us are walking in a phantom show, which is not really anything, but only seems to be.

6. *Surely they are disquieted in vain:*

They make a dreadful noise in the tumult of the battle, the din of the exchange, the hum of the streets, the fret and worry of the counting house, but it is all in vain.

6. *He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.*

If a man does succeed in amassing wealth, it is a poor success, the muckrake gathers, and then comes the fork that scatters. One man hoards it up, and another takes as much delight in squandering it. They think that they have entailed their estate, and that their name and house will continue as long as the sun, but it all comes to nothing. “Vanity of vanities,” said the son of David, “all is vanity,” and his father had said so before him!

7. *And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.*

There is no vanity in that declaration. Now we are on the rock, now we have come to something real. When a man trusts in the unchanging God, and hopes in the ever-blessed Savior, he has come out of his state of vanity, “My hope is in thee.”

8. *Deliver me from all my transgressions:*

We had not expected David to offer that prayer, we might have thought that he would say, “Deliver me from all my troubles, and from my many vexing thoughts.” But no, he lays the axe at the root of the evil, “Deliver me from all my transgressions.” There is only One who can do that, even the glorious Son of God, who lived and died to save His people from their sins.

8. *Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*

“The wicked will be ready enough to catch me up, and pour scorn upon me. Lord, keep me so right with You, and so near to Yourself that they may never be able to reproach me!”

9. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.*

This verse should read, “I will be dumb, I will not open my mouth, because Thou hast done it.” That is a better silence than the first, for the psalmist is getting into a right state. This is the proper silence, the other was brazen, this is golden. God help us to know how and when to practice it! Never speak against God whatever He does, open not your mouth when He chastens because whatever He does must be right.

10. *Remove thy stroke away from me:*

Having come to complete submission, he ventures to pray for deliverance from his sorrow. You may pray very boldly and very freely when you can truly say, “Thy will be done.” David had said that he would not open his mouth against his God, and now he begins to plead, “Remove thy stroke away from me.”

10. *I am consumed by the blow of thy hand.*

When God does strike it is no playing matter, a blow of His hand consumes us.

11. *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth:*

As a moth eats up the fur or the cloth, and spoils it, so, when God's corrections come upon us, our beauty is soon gone. Poor beauty it must be that can so soon go. Lord, let Your beauty be upon us, for no moth can ever eat into that!

11. *Surely every man is vanity. Selah.*

In the fifth verse, you see that when the psalmist reached that point, he stopped and said, "Selah," and he does so again here. Striking his lyre with a heavy hand, he has put it out of tune again, so he pauses, and begins to screw the strings up once more. You and I often need to be screwed up like the strings of a harp, to put us in right order before we go on to praise or to pray.

12. *Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry:*

See how David's "prayer" grows into a "cry." It deepens in intensity, there is more power in a cry than in an ordinary prayer, it shows more earnestness and implies greater urgency, "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry."

12. *Hold not thy peace at my tears:*

That is a still more powerful mode of pleading. Tears are the irresistible weapons of weakness. Women, children, beggars, and sinners, can all conquer by tears, when they can win by nothing else, if they will take to these pearly drops, and especially if they can look through them to the crimson drops of a Savior's blood, they can win what they will of God, "Hold not thy peace at my tears."

12. *For I am a stranger with thee,—*

The believer is a stranger in this world, just as God is. The Lord made the world, but the world does not know its Maker, and it does not know His people.

*"'Tis no surprising thing,
That we should be unknown:
The Jewish world knew not their King,
God's everlasting Son."*

"I am a stranger," not to Thee, but "with thee, a stranger even as thou art." There is another very beautiful meaning to this expression. You know how the Orientals exercise hospitality to strangers, when they once take them into their tent, they supply them liberally, and treat them honorably. "I am a stranger with thee." I am a poor alien who has come into God's house, to tarry for a while with Him, I have eaten of His salt, I have cast myself upon His protection, so He will certainly take care of me, "I am a stranger with thee."

12. *And a sojourner, as all my fathers were.*

"They did not remain here. My fathers used this world merely as an inn, at which they stayed for a night, in the morning, they hurried on to the city that hath foundations, on the other side of Jordan—

*"To the islands of the Blessed,
To the land of the Hereafter,"*

where the saints dwell forever with their Lord.

13. *O spare me,—*

"Deal gently with me, do not break me in pieces. If You must needs smite me, yet do not altogether crush me. 'O spare me'"—

13. *That I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.*

"Let me be able to take a little nourishment, and to gather my faculties together yet again, that I may sing to You some sweeter hymn before I cease to be in the land of the living, and go hence out of this world." So, you see, this is a sweet psalm, after all, it is a bitter sweet, a sweet bitter, a psalm that tends

towards our spiritual health. Many of us understand what David meant by it. May others, who as yet do not, soon be taught its gracious lessons! Amen.

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